

## WHEN SUCCESS BECOMES A NEWSWORTHY TREND • BY TONI BRISTOL

We are going to take a different approach in our press releases for this year's August Campaign (National Children's Vision and Learning Month). Typically we have featured individual parents, educators, as well as Larry Fitzgerald and Dr. Sue Barry. However, this year we would like to share stories from all over the US, and the world.

In order to do this, we need your help. We need at least 10 parents and patients who are willing to step forward and share their stories with the media. There are specific types of cases that we would like to feature:

1. Children who had convergence insufficiency but were misdiagnosed with ADHD.
2. Children who performed poorly on standardized tests before vision therapy and are doing well now that the vision problem has been treated.

If the parents of these children are influential in their community that would be great, such as health care professionals, educators, attorneys, or politicians, etc. However, this is not a prerequisite. These parents need to be well spoken, and very clear that the changes in their children are due to vision therapy.

Ideally these children passed vision screenings and prior eye exams, and had tried other interventions before finding vision therapy. Their message will be that they hope other parents will seek out a COVD doctor first.

### Identifying Patients Who Will Help Us Spread the Word

Gathering success stories can sometimes be difficult. Patients will periodically send thank you letters, but how do you get success stories on a regular basis? And, is there a specific formula that should be followed when the stories are written?

The most powerful formula for a success story is one which includes: 1) A good overview of what life was like before VT; 2) It tells a little about other professionals who were seen and other solutions that were tried—to no avail; 3) If the patient was 20/20, and the problem was missed by vision screenings or other eye exams; and 4) What life is like now, after finishing VT.

Having a "Success Form" can be helpful. It is a good idea to put an introductory paragraph at the top of the form which says something like:

*We are delighted to have helped resolve your vision problem. In order to help others who are trying to decide how soon to start vision therapy, we would appreciate it if you could write a few words of encouragement. (For example, if you could describe what life was like before therapy and how it is now—what you feel has been gained by doing therapy.)*

Because the changes are often very gradual and parents may forget what life was like before VT it is helpful to give the parent or patient (if an adult) a copy of the symptoms checklist they filled in for the first evaluation along with a new symptom

checklist to fill out at the time of the final progress evaluation. This helps to jog the parent's memory about what life was like before. At the same time, the parent should also be given a Success Form to fill out in the office just prior to seeing the doctor for the final progress evaluation.

Make sure your Success Form also has a section at the bottom for the patient to sign authorizing you to share what they wrote with others.

Once you identify a patient who is willing to be part of the August Campaign, please email it to Pam Happ at [phapp@covd.org](mailto:phapp@covd.org). Be sure to give us an overview of the case and some information on the parents.

When the story is accepted on a preliminary basis we will send you a more in-depth questionnaire to send to the parent to fill out. If, however, the parent is a very influential individual and you think that a live interview would be more appropriate, please just give us all the info and then I will speak with you directly to figure out the best approach.

If you have any questions, please email either Pam Happ or me. Be sure to watch the COVD Email Blasts for more details.

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